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THE EFFECT OF UNIONISM UPON THE MINE WORKER

In the anthracite industry of Pennsylvania 147,651 men and boys are employed directly in the mining of coal and in its preparation for market. Of these, 49,217 work outside the mines, or above ground, and 98,434 inside, or underground.¹ The former comprise 804 superintendents, bookkeepers and clerks, 379 foreman, 2,331 blacksmiths and carpenters, 4,615 engineers and firemen, 19,564 slate-pickers and 21,524 undesignated, the latter including slope and shaft headmen, shaft helpers, plane footmen and headmen, car-dumpers (breaker), slate-shovelers and wheelers, men in chutes above screens, men cutting and loading timber, oilers (machinery), loaders of big cars, ash-wheelers, blacksmiths' helpers, mule-drivers, watchmen, etc. The underground workers include 539 foremen, 830 fire-bosses, 3,148 door-boys and helpers, 10,894 drivers and runners, 26,268 laborers, 37,804 miners and 18,951 undesignated, the latter comprising tracklayers and helpers, shaft repairmen, timbermen and helpers, shaft footmen and helpers, slope headmen, plane or wheel runners, plane footmen, masons, road-cleaners, car-couplers, pumpmen, stablemen and helpers, pipemen, water-bailers, men unloading rock, etc.

All these employees form two general classes—the skilled and the unskilled. The former include the groups designated as blacksmiths, carpenters, engineers, firemen, miners, inside and outside foremen, fire-bosses and one or two of the undesignated groups. The unskilled groups are the slate-pickers, door-boys and helpers, drivers and runners, laborers and the great majority of the undesignated inside and outside employees. Among the individuals composing any particular group in either class there are varying degrees of skill—some are less unskilled or more skilled than others. The most unskilled in any particular group in time become the least unskilled in that group: the least unskilled in time pass into some skilled group. Thus there is a constant interchange of individuals from group to group and from class to class, the general tendency being a progression from the most unskilled to the most skilled. Miners are always passing out of that group to become fire-bosses, foremen,

¹ Report State Bureau of Mines, 1901.

superintendents or into other higher occupations, both inside and outside the industry; others are killed, many end their days in the county poor-house, while some are forced back into the breaker or into other unskilled groups. The once skilled miner who, through accident or disease or old age, becomes incapacitated for longer filling that position not infrequently returns to the unskilled class, usually as a breaker "boy." A no more heartrending scene can be depicted than the sight of this type of an old man—a class appearing old even when in middle life—seated alongside the breaker boys just entering their teens and picking slate for 75 to 90 cents a day. His pilgrimage through this world is from the cradle into the mines as a breaker boy and out of the mines into the grave as a breaker "boy." To fill the places in the mines vacated in these ways the least unskilled of the laborers become miners forming the least skilled of the latter group. While the laborers are properly classified as unskilled, there is a point where they almost insensibly merge into the skilled class. The laborer of two or more years' experience in the mine is always on the verge of passing into the ranks of the skilled miner. The laborer entering the mine for the first time is usually the most unskilled of all in that unskilled group, while the laborer ready to become a miner is the least unskilled in that group and becomes the least skilled among the miners when he passes over the dividing line. It is the least unskilled laborer who usually competes with the least skilled miner for a place in the latter group.

While there is a difference of skill in the labor of the individuals composing any particular group capital, as a rule, does not enter into a detailed and minute measurement of this skill. Capital classifies it roughly in the distinction made between groups. It recognizes the broad difference between skilled and unskilled labor in paying higher prices to the former. It also separates the different kinds of skilled labor—it pays blacksmith labor one price, engineer labor another and miner labor still another. The same is true of the unskilled labor—it pays door-boy labor one price, driver labor another and the labor of the laborer still another. As a rule at any one colliery the individuals in the same group receive the same wage;²

² This is not true of all miners, although it is true of any particular sub-group in that occupation. Some are company miners and some are contract miners. Among the latter some may be working by the yard, others by the ton and some by the car plan. For any particular sub-group, however, the basis for determining the wage is the same. The difference in the wages actually received by individual miners even in any sub-group is due to the effect varying natural conditions have upon their expenditure of energy.

individuals in different groups receive different wages. The group receiving the highest wage, which is open to the largest number of men, is that of the miner. This has the effect of drawing workers from nearly all the unskilled groups toward that position.³ Before they can become miners, however, the laws of Pennsylvania require that they shall possess a certificate of competency from the Miners' Examining Board, and to secure this certificate the individual must have had not less than two years' experience as a miner or as a laborer in the mines. This has the effect of emphasizing temporarily the importance of the laborers' position.

There are two general streams of unskilled labor flowing into the mines to become laborers. They come from distinct and widely varying sources. One stream originates in the mining communities—it is composed mostly of children of workers already engaged in the various occupations about the mines. This stream enters the industry through the breaker where boys are employed in picking slate. As a rule slate-pickers become door-boys or helpers; door-boys pass into the ranks of drivers or runners and drivers become laborers. By the time these individuals reach the laborers' position they have a certain preparation back of them which in many trades or callings would add to the value of their labor. They all have practically the same industrial and social environment which sets a standard of living varying but little among them. To meet this standard a certain wage is necessary. Above them are other groups in the community receiving higher wages, which enables a still higher standard to be maintained. Through imitating this higher standard forces are set in motion which if not counteracted would cause an increase in wages. This increase is secured in cases by individuals passing from one occupation to another in the industry.

The other stream of unskilled workers flowing into the mines to become laborers has its source in European countries thousands of miles from the anthracite region.⁴ It is composed of different nationalities coming from different industrial environments. These have been such as to enable this type of a foreigner to maintain his labor on a standard of living very little above the cost of supplying

³Some of the unskilled workers become blacksmiths, carpenters, firemen, engineers, etc.

⁴This foreigner—generally speaking he is the Slav, including the Bohemian, Slovak, Pole, Lithuanian, etc.—began to enter the anthracite fields about 1875, shortly after the railroads became mine owners. At that time the native American and the English, German, Irish and Welsh immigrant formed the mining population.

his mere animal demands for food, clothing and shelter. His one pressing demand is to meet these wants. He can do so only by selling his labor. Placed in the anthracite region by the force of circumstances,⁵ without either the time or the means or the knowledge even if he had the mental quality to look elsewhere for work—to take his labor to other markets—he is made a worker in and about the mines. Under such conditions any wage that will keep body and soul together is to him better than no wage. Without preliminary training in other mining occupations about the colliery he at once enters the mine as a laborer. Some of the foreigners, such as the Italian, do not as a rule enter the mines, and in such cases their competition is confined almost exclusively to the occupations above ground.

The object of capital invested in the anthracite industry is to secure the labor it is in need of at the lowest possible price. It cares nothing as to where it comes from or who possesses it. The labor which will do the work capital wants done for the lowest price, other things being equal, is the labor capital buys. The particular work capital has for labor to do in the laborers' position demands very little more than physical strength—the task requires quantity rather than quality of labor. The foreigner has this as much as the laborer reared in the anthracite communities, and generally he is induced to use that energy in a way that results more to the advantage of capital. He is willing to work in more dangerous places and in poorer seams and to put up with inconveniences benefiting capital of which the native-born laborer complains. The foreigner offers his labor for a wage that will maintain that labor—at a price but little above what is necessary to supply his mere physical

⁵ In an article on "The Real Cause of the Miners' Strike," published in *The Outlook* of August 30, 1902, I stated that "when the railroad mine-owning companies, about 1875, began the introduction of the cheap labor from southern and eastern Europe into the hard coal fields of Pennsylvania, they set in motion economic forces whose workings to-day are manifested in the strike of 147,000 anthracite mine workers." To this, as well as to other statements in that article, Mr. Henry S. Fleming, Secretary of the Anthracite Coal Operators' Association, took exceptions in a communication published in the New York *Sun* of September 10, 1902, stating that "the assertion that the mining companies imported Slav labor is false in every particular." Mr. Fleming's denial is not convincing, or rather it but confirms my belief that the facts are as I stated them in *The Outlook*. In this I am supported by other unbiased investigators who have given some attention to the situation, such as Dr. Peter Roberts, in "The Anthracite Coal Industry," page 104, and Dr. G. O. Virtue, in "The Anthracite Mine Laborers," Bulletin of the Department of Labor, No. 13, November, 1897. Mr. Fleming's criticism has furnished me with no reasons for altering any of my statements in *The Outlook* article.

demands for food, clothing and shelter. The native-born laborer demands a wage that will permit him to support a certain standard of living. There is a considerable difference between the two wages. One is a low wage; the other a high wage. Here is much the same kind of a commodity in practically the same market.⁶ This market is usually oversupplied with this commodity. Under such conditions it cannot sell at two different prices—capital will buy the labor which bears the lowest price. This forces the possessors of the commodity asking the higher price either to withdraw it from the market—to leave the industry—or to lower its price. The price of labor—the wage of the laborer—always tends in the same market toward that set by the particular part having the lowest cost of production or the lowest standard of living. The effect is the same whether the miner or the operator employs the laborer. This is shown in the working of the “contract” system in vogue at some of the collieries prior to the strike of 1900. Under this plan a certain section of a seam of coal, comprising a number of breasts, or working-places, was let out under contract to a skilled miner by the foreman; that is, the miner agreed to take out a certain part of a seam for a stated sum of money. He would then employ miners and laborers to do the work, bidding them against each other for the places. The lower the wage for which these men worked the greater the earnings of the contract miner. This “contract” system aided capital materially in reducing wages throughout the region, appealing as it did to the self-interest of the most skilled miners. This system is being gradually abolished through the efforts of the United Mine Workers of America. One of the demands in the strike of 1900 was that “no miner shall have at any time more than one breast, gangway or working-place.”

This competition of the foreigner affects the native-born workers in all the unskilled groups. It checks the flow of the stream of native born labor on its way to the laborer's position. Some drivers who are about to become laborers are prevented from doing so. The avenue of advancement out of that group being partly closed, competition within the group is intensified not only among those already drivers but between them and the door-boys, who are on the way to become drivers. The same is true of the door-boy group—those pre-

⁶ For the sake of brevity and to eliminate any possibility of confusion, I refrain from going into details as to the different kinds of markets in the industry.

vented from passing out of that group are forced to check the advance into the mines of the breaker boys. If the stream flowing into the breaker is not materially diminished, an oversupply of labor in all these unskilled groups is the result. This of itself would prevent an increase in wages. At the same time in nearly every one of these groups are some foreigners, or others forced out of a higher group by the foreigner, whose competition for places tends to keep wages nearest the lowest point just as we have seen is the case among the laborers. The larger the stream pouring in from Europe—the greater the number of foreigners compelled to sell their labor—the more intense is this competition.

After two years or more as a laborer the foreigner begins to compete with the miner for the latter's position. He still retains to a greater or less degree his low cost of maintaining his labor, the influences at work upon him in his new environment not having been sufficiently powerful to raise him so soon to a much higher standard of living. As a miner the foreigner competes with a worker who has a higher standard still than has the native-born laborer. The tendency of this competition is to pull down a standard which has acted as a powerful magnet to draw thousands of unskilled workers to higher standards in the industrial life of the community. The effect is not evident so much in the rates paid the miner⁷ as it is in nearly all those elements which enter into determining the miners' net wages.

The tendency in recent years has been for these net wages to decrease. This has been brought about through an increase in the number as well as the cost of the tools the miner must use in his work, in a decrease in the quantity of coal resulting from the use of the same amount of powder,⁸ in the withdrawal of certain allowances for what was formerly regarded as extra work accompanying his calling, in an increase in the necessity for as well as the expense of insurance to meet the increased risk of his calling following the employment in the mines of non-English speaking workers, in an increase in the amount of coal he must mine at old rates⁹ and in various other ways. These changes in the conditions

⁷ There has been no change in the rates since 1880 (excluding those accompanying the operation of the sliding scale in the Lehigh and Schuylkill fields) with the exception of the 10 per cent increase secured by the mine workers' union at the close of the strike in 1900.

⁸ The price of powder was reduced from \$2.75 to \$1.50 a keg in the Wyoming and Lehigh fields by the strike of 1900.

⁹ This came about in requiring the miner to fill larger cars, to increase the number of pounds to a ton, and in the operation of the docking system

of employment should have been accompanied by an increase in wages or by compensating advantages in other ways if the miner was to maintain his standard of living. As it was his necessity for more money wages increased,¹⁰ at the same time the competition of the foreigner prevented an increase in those wages. Not only did the competition of the foreigner prevent an increase in wages when changing conditions demanded it, but it put in motion forces which resulted in an actual decrease in net wages. In brief the forces at work upon the English-speaking miner down to the strike of 1900 tended year by year to increase the distance between wants and wages; the former were increasing not only in the ways mentioned but in other ways, while the latter were decreasing. In consequence his real wages were growing less—his standard of living was being lowered. Such a condition, whether it is that of the miner or one more fortunately circumstanced in life, causes dissatisfaction and results in discontent. This was the condition of the English-speaking miner. I do not mean to say that it was true of every one of them; I do not infer that all of them were in exactly the same condition as regards wants and income, but I do say that as a general statement forces were at work tending to that end. They operated less ruthlessly upon some than upon others, but they had somewhat the same effect upon all. This was the man and these were the general forces that brought about both strikes. The Slav had no particular grievances at either time sufficient to force him to strike. Although he worked under almost the same conditions of employment as regards his relation to capital as the English-speaking mine worker, the forces attacking the latter's comparatively high standard of living did not affect the Slav.

I cannot here go into details as to the far-reaching effects of this competition of a low with a high standard of living.¹¹ It crosses and recrosses every occupation in the industry—skilled as well as unskilled. Among the individuals in the same group and between the different groups competition is intensified. In all of them workers are forced out of the industry; some are compelled to lower

¹⁰ The cost to the miner in the application of his labor to produce coal had increased just as the cost of producing a ton of coal had increased to the mining companies, but labor had been unable to receive compensation in raising wages while capital had succeeded in demanding higher prices for its commodity.

¹¹ For a more detailed account of the competition of the Slav with the English-speaking mine worker, the reader is referred to my article, "The Real Cause of the Miners' Strike," in *The Outlook* of August 30, 1902.

their standard of living; others are prevented from raising their standard, while to many the struggle to exist becomes a severe battle for the necessities of life. The pressure on some mine workers is so great as to force their boys of tender years into the breaker and their girl children into the silk mill in order that their mites may add to the family income. This competition affects the lives of hundreds of thousands of people; it even determines the number of births in a community as well as influences powerfully the physical and mental qualities of many yet unborn. It is one of the great dominant forces at work in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania to-day threatening and retarding communal advancement and attacking those institutions which we as Americans justly pride so highly. Like all great forces it has its beginning in small things—in the ability of a group of men to live on less than another group—in the desire of the managers of capital to secure a low cost of production—and like these forces its effects are so far-reaching as to be untraceable in all their manifestations.

This unrestrained competition of labor with labor in the anthracite industry is the same economic law working destruction to a fair wage for labor as had played havoc and wrought ruin not only to a fair interest on capital but to a large part of capital itself in that industry. The high interest which capital at one time secured from anthracite mining had drawn other capital into the region to produce coal. Soon there was too much capital invested for the work to be done. Capital which could do that work for the least return—whose cost of producing coal was lowest—competed with the capital which needed a greater return in order to meet its higher cost of production. Capital generally was in the industry and could not readily go elsewhere. It had to earn an income for its owner. A low interest was to some managers of capital better than no interest. Some of the capital demanding a higher return sought investment elsewhere, but by far the greater part of it was compelled to work for a small return and in not a few cases for no return at all. The remuneration of capital in the anthracite industry generally was fixed by that part of it whose cost of production was lowest. Continued competition ushered in that period when capital as represented in mining operations and transportation facilities was forced to succumb and bankruptcy after bankruptcy of railroads and mining companies attest to the ruinous operation of uncontrolled com-

petition and to the fact that capital demanding a fair return for the work it performed was unable longer to work at the price set by the "cheap" capital.

The remedy for such conditions capital is seeking in the consolidation of railroads and mining plants. The "cheap," or non-union capital,—that which can mine coal at a lower cost of production and in consequence can sell it at a lower price—is either driven from the industry or forced to sell its commodity at the price demanded by that capital whose cost of production is greater. This price is fixed arbitrarily—it is set at the highest possible point¹² that will enable the working capital whose cost of production is greater to secure what is to it a fair profit. All capital producing at less cost necessarily earns a higher and higher interest as it approaches that having the lowest cost of production. Organization of capital then, is of advantage to all capital remaining in the industry. It is a disadvantage to the consumer of coal in the sense that prices are higher than under unrestrained competition of capital with capital.

Labor in the anthracite industry is attempting through organization to secure ends similar to those of capital. It aims to control the competition of labor with labor in that industry—to hold in check or minimize the evil workings of all those economic forces which tend toward compelling labor generally to sell at the price fixed by that part whose cost of production is lowest. With an oversupply of labor and the competition of two widely varying standards of living for the limited work there is to be done either the high priced or the low priced labor must ultimately leave the industry—the former will be lowered or the latter must be raised. The present is a most critical time in determining which it shall be. If unrestrained competition continues the Slav labor will dominate and the English-speaking worker will be driven out almost entirely. This emigration from the industry of the English-speaking mine worker has been going on for years as the Slav stream of immigration from the European countries has increased in volume.¹³ The forces back

¹² There is a point beyond which it cannot go, and that is where the consumer begins to exercise his power to control price through substituting some other fuel. This is plainly seen in the prices of those sizes of anthracite used for steam purposes with which the bituminous product competes. And here again, we see in the prices of steam sizes of anthracite the effect of the competition of a low with a high cost of production.

¹³ The increase of Poles, Hungarians and Italians among the employees of the Philadelphia & Reading Coal and Iron Company, the largest employer of labor in the Schuylkill field, from 1890 to 1896 was 12.6 per cent—from 23.6 to 36.2 per cent. The Poles increased 7 per cent—

of the movement have until recently been working so quietly that they have not drawn the attention of the general public. In recent years, however, the struggle has become most severe, resulting in general industrial unrest throughout the region and not infrequently in violence and bloodshed. If this competition of labor with labor in the industry is controlled the English-speaking mine worker is likely to remain in the ascendancy. This he will be able to do through taking the Slav into the United Mine Workers of America and setting for him a standard wage below which he is not permitted to work. This wage will be higher than the wage would be in open competition and in consequence will result to the advantage of all labor remaining in the industry—to the labor whose cost of production is least as well as to the labor whose standard of living is greater. The cheap, or non-union labor, just as was done in the case of non-union capital, will be driven from the industry.¹⁴ The forces operating to this end receive more public attention than they do when acting upon capital, because of the ensuing violence and bloodshed. This is due to the impossibility of separating labor from its possessor, while capital is easily dissociated from the physical being of its owner. In driving non-union capital out of the industry the person of the owner is not directly affected. But in the case of non-union labor it is necessary to attack the individual laborer. This manifests itself through boycotting and violence. The underlying forces at work in the case both of capital and labor are not, however, one whit different.

The organization of labor, just as in the case of the organization of capital, means a higher price for the commodity than would result under unrestrained competition. In the one case the com-

from 17.3 to 24.3 per cent; the Huns, 5.3 per cent—from 5.9 to 11.2 per cent; and the Italians .3 per cent—from .4 to .7 per cent. For the same years the number of English-speaking mine workers decreased as follows: English, 2.1 per cent; Irish, 6.5 per cent; German, 3.7 per cent; Welsh, 1.5 per cent, and Scotch, .3 per cent, while American employees increased but 1.5 per cent.—From statistics published by Dr. G. O. Virtue in "The Anthracite Mine Laborers," Bulletin No. 13, Department of Labor.

Statistics from the twenty-second report of the United States Geological Survey show the percentages of nationalities for the entire region to be as follows: Americans, 21; Irish, 16; English, 5; Welsh, 9; German, 4; Scotch, 1—a total of 56 per cent; Poles, 27; Hungarians, 6; Italians, 3; Austrians, Slavs and Lithuanians, over one per cent each—a total of over 39 per cent for the non-English-speaking nationalities.

¹⁴ In the sense here intended the cheap labor is driven from the industry if it raises its price to that of the union labor. From the point of view of organization, non-union labor may remain in the industry if it works for union prices. Mere membership or non-membership in an organization is not the meaning I give to union and non-union labor. Usually, however, the two are identical.

modity is labor; in the other it is coal. In both cases the consumer is affected. The consumer of mine labor is the railroad mining companies; the consumer of coal is the general public. The object of the consumer is to secure the commodity at the lowest possible price. An increase in price then, naturally affects disadvantageously the interests of the consumer. For this reason he objects to organization to control the price of the commodity.¹⁵ This explains why the railroad mining companies have steadfastly, if not stubbornly, refused to recognize the United Mine Workers of America. The coal consuming public has as persistently refused to recognize the combination of railroads and consolidation of mining companies for the control of the price of anthracite. The public has even gone so far as to pass laws prohibiting this very thing. Despite these laws the combination exists and will continue to exist. This plain fact the consumers of coal should recognize; they should direct their energies to minimizing its evil workings and aim to secure more and more of its benefits instead of trying to fool themselves into the belief that that which exists does not exist. The same can be said of the railroad mining companies in their relation to the organization of mine labor. The forces compelling the mine workers to unite for their common good are so powerful that the opposition of the combination of capital will ultimately prove futile. It matters not what the particular organization is called; if it is not the United Mine Workers of America the same forces will be at work under some other name. And the cost to capital in opposing the working of these forces will in the end be far greater than would result from a recognition of them and the directing of efforts toward minimizing their evil effects.

As it is, organized capital is denying to organized labor what it claims for itself; organized capital demands for non-union labor what it refuses to grant to non-union capital. No one would claim such an attitude to be consistent because capital is no more consistent than labor when its interests are in jeopardy. From the point of view of the public, however, if organized capital exercises the "right" to compel non-union capital to sell its coal at the rates set by the capital having the greater cost of production, then organized labor has just as much of a "right" to compel non-union labor to sell its labor at a price—to work for a wage—which will enable that part to support

¹⁵ The consumer feels directly the increase in cost resulting from organization, but does not see so plainly the indirect benefits to him flowing out of organization. He is thus inclined to oppose it.

its standard of living which is at a greater cost in producing its labor. If this is true, then its opposite—that the laborer has the “right” to sell his commodity in a “free” market to whom, when and how he chooses—is not true. It would be just the same as demanding and compelling that capital in the anthracite industry which can produce coal at the lowest possible price shall have the “right” to sell its commodity in a “free” market at whatever price the owners of that capital choose to ask. But when this question is propounded to the manager of capital he at once ceases to be a consumer of mine labor and becomes a producer of coal. As a consumer his object is to secure the commodity at the lowest possible price; as a producer his purpose is to sell his commodity at the highest possible price. This explains the reason but does not justify the attitude of the manager of capital who denies to non-union capital that “right” which he so persistently claims for non-union labor.

The “right” of the individual worker in the anthracite industry is not so much in a “free” market as it is in a market where a fair wage is assured. He has had a “free” market in open competition and we have seen what it has resulted in to him. Capital invested in the different industries in the United States would have the same kind of a “free” market if the tariff bars were let down and it was forced to meet the competition of cheaper products from European countries. Labor reared under American conditions and forced by our social and political institutions to meet a certain standard of living should not be compelled to compete with European labor having no such demands upon it. The experience of the past in the anthracite industry teaches us that it will be forced so to compete unless labor organizes for its own protection. In this way it may not be able to prevent immigration through tariff laws but it can protect its market by controlling the competition of the European labor when it enters that industry. Its aim in so doing is to secure what it believes to be a fair market by setting a minimum wage below which labor shall not be sold in that industry. It does this by taking the men of different nationalities, races, creeds, customs and languages, with their widely varying powers of industrial competition, and joining them in a common cause by the bond of unionism. Despite the prophecies of close students of conditions in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania all these heretofore antagonistic elements have been organized into “locals” according to their nation-

alities and languages and places of employment and around them all has been drawn a circle of mystic signals and signs and outward symbols by which each can understand that the other, even though he be a stranger in language, has the same common end in bettering their conditions of employment.

This bond of unionism is stronger than one can readily imagine who has not seen its mysterious workings or who has not been a victim of its members' newly found enthusiasm. It is to-day the strongest single tie binding together the 147,000 mine workers and the thousands dependent upon them. It is more to them than politics, more than religion, more even than the strong social ties usually binding together the members of a community. It is all of this and more to the mine workers, because it has done for them what all these others could not do. It tends to destroy the enmity between men in different occupations in the industry, at different collieries, in the different fields and to a certain extent even between the different nationalities. Before the organization came into the region group fought against group, class against class, race against race, and district against district. Instead of this continual internal strife the union has directed their energies into the channel of co-operation one with another.¹⁶ Organization is teaching them the great benefit to the individual that comes from co-operation for the common good. In brief, the union is socializing the heterogeneous mass; is making it over from the individualistic point of view to that of the industrial group to which they, for the time being, happen to belong. It is changing the mine worker from a pessimist to an optimist. It has not prevented him from being discontented; it has probably made him more so, but there is as much difference between a pessimistically discontented man and an optimistically discontented mine worker as there is between poverty and progress. The former is hopeless; the latter hopeful. The former makes for drunkenness, extravagance of small wages and all the accompanying social evils of a mining town. The latter teaches sobriety, frugality and strengthens in fact all those virtues which go to make social progress.

¹⁶ In demanding concessions from capital the majority of the mine workers present a united front, but within their ranks are many deep-rooted jealousies, some transplanted from foreign soils and nourished at first by their new environment, which tend to cause continual friction and internal strife. Probably the strongest of these is the difference in language. It has until recently formed an almost impassable barrier between the English-speaking mine worker and the Slav.

Through long years of failure when unorganized, the mine worker had been taught thoroughly the lesson that alone and unaided he could do nothing for himself in battling against the forces tending to bring him to a low estate. By two years of unionism he has learned thoroughly what a strong organization can do for him. In that time through the United Mine Workers of America he has seen the competition of the Slav controlled and regulated for the benefit of nearly all employees. Following this he has not only secured a direct increase in wages,¹⁷ but has seen the operation of those forces which indirectly affected his earnings turned to his advantage. By the strike of 1900 the sliding scale for regulating wages in the Lehigh and Schuylkill fields was abolished¹⁸ and the price of powder to the miner in the Wyoming and Lehigh fields was reduced from \$2.75 to \$1.50 a keg.¹⁹ In the strike just closed the United Mine Workers demanded certain other concessions which if granted will tend to bring about more uniform conditions of employment in the three fields. These demands included an eight-hour work day, a minimum day wage, a more uniform plan for weighing coal and the recognition of the union. An increase in wages was also among the demands.

The effect unionism has had upon the employer of mine labor is also not without great benefit to the mine worker. It has made those conducting company stores, who made a practice of overcharging their customers, more circumspect in demanding high prices from the workers about the collieries; it has made the docking boss more careful in measuring the quantity of good coal when the miners' car load passes to the breaker; it has taught the operator that if the grievances of the mine employees become unendurable they are no longer forced to bear them but have recourse to a powerful organization which will take up their cause and fight if needs be to secure them justice.

It should not be inferred from what has been said that the writer argues for the retention in the anthracite industry of the English-speaking nationalities—the Americans, English, Germans, Irish,

¹⁷ The increase in the strike of 1900 was 10 per cent. It is likely another increase will result from the strike just closed.

¹⁸ This sliding scale had never been in use in the Wyoming and Lackawanna field. Under changed conditions the mine workers claimed that its operation had come to be disadvantageous to their best interests.

¹⁹ Powder had already been selling at \$1.50 a keg in the Schuylkill field.

Welsh, etc. The employment is of such a hazardous nature that each year hundreds of lives are forfeited in the various occupations. In 1901, according to the report of the State Bureau of Mines, a total of 513 employees were killed and 1,243 were injured in and about the collieries in the production of 60,000,000 tons of coal. Thus for every 117,000 tons mined one life was forfeited and for every 48,270 tons there was one non-fatal accident. For each day the mines were in operation an average of 2.06 lives were lost. In the ten years ending December 31, 1900, a total of 4,381 employees lost their lives through accidents of one kind or another. While it is possible this cost in human life can be reduced it cannot be eliminated entirely. As long as it must be paid the best interests of society will be served by permitting the least valuable members of the mining communities to be the victims. Generally the English-speaking nationalities are married men with children and their deaths mean not only a cost to society in caring for their widows and children—through the 513 fatal accidents last year 277 wives were made widows and 624 children became orphans, but they present momentous social problems which the anthracite communities so far have not been able to solve. The Slav, as a rule, is unmarried, with no children, and his death is not usually followed by any long continued injury to society.

Even though it is found to be for the best, after a thorough investigation of all the conditions, that the Slav should be permitted to supplant the English-speaking nationalities in this industry, it does not follow that the economic forces tending to bring this about should be permitted to continue the havoc now being wrought by their operation. It should be possible to so control these forces as to secure the change with much less injury to the communities as well as to the mine workers. One such method is through the organization of the workers. By all means the low standard of living of the Slav should not be permitted to dominate the industry. If the forces which each year bring greater pressure to bear on capital to secure a lower and lower cost of production are allowed to work on labor uncontrolled it will be only a question of time when the supremacy of the Slav will in turn be attacked by still cheaper labor, possibly that of the Chinese, and the struggle of the past quarter of a century will have to be fought over again to the still further injury if not to the destruction of American social, political and industrial institutions in the anthracite region. Whatever nationality is to dominate

the industry a standard of living conformable to American conditions should be enforced upon the workers as well as upon capital. This is possible under present conditions only through such an organization as the United Mine Workers of America.

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